

HELPING UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH ACCESS HIGHER EDUCATION

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Who are Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

- Unaccompanied: not living in the physical custody of a parent or guardian
- Homeless: lacking fixed, regular, and adequate housing
 - Specifically includes sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason (“couch-surfing”); motels; shelters; transitional housing

Why Are They Homeless and On Their Own?

- Parental abuse - physical and sexual
- Abandoned or neglected
- Kicked out due to sexual orientation or pregnancy
- Returned from foster care to unstable/unsafe arrangements
- Adopted from foster care, but kicked out after age 18
- Exited from foster care without adequate housing and/or supports

Prevalence in High School and College

- Public schools have documented significant increases in youth homelessness:
 - 1,168,364 homeless students in public schools, preK-12, in 2011-2012 school year
 - 10% increase over previous year, 72% increase since the recession (2006-2007 school year)
- Applications indicating homelessness on the FAFSA (only unaccompanied homeless youth)
 - 53,705 in 2011-2012
 - 58,158 in 2012-2013

Impact of Homelessness on Education

- **Barriers:** enrollment documentation; high mobility; invisibility/lack of awareness; social-emotional-physical problems (hunger, fatigue, illness, trauma, fear)
- In 2011-2012, less than half of homeless students who were tested met state proficiency in reading, math, science
- Higher drop-out and lower graduation rates (VA and CO data)

Barriers to Higher Education Access

- Lack of parental income and support
- Barriers accessing financial aid
- Barriers receiving subsequent year determinations of homeless status
- Lack of housing during holiday and summer breaks
- Food insecurities on campus
- Lack of information about available support
Struggle to balance school and other responsibilities

McKinney-Vento Act

- State coordinators at State Education Agencies
- School district liaisons
- Identification
- Immediate enrollment
- School stability
- Transportation
- Posting of public notice

TRIO Provisions

- TRIO programs must identify and make available services for homeless youth
- Homeless youth are automatically eligible to participate in TRIO programs.
- TRIO funds may be used to provide programs and activities specially designed for homeless youth
- Student Support Services funds can be used to secure temporary housing during breaks in the academic year for homeless children and youth and foster youth.

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth and the FAFSA

- Independent student status on FAFSA since 2009
- Determinations made by:
 - School District homeless liaison
 - RHYA-funded shelter director or designee
 - HUD-funded shelter director or designee
 - College financial aid administrator

Application and Verification Guide

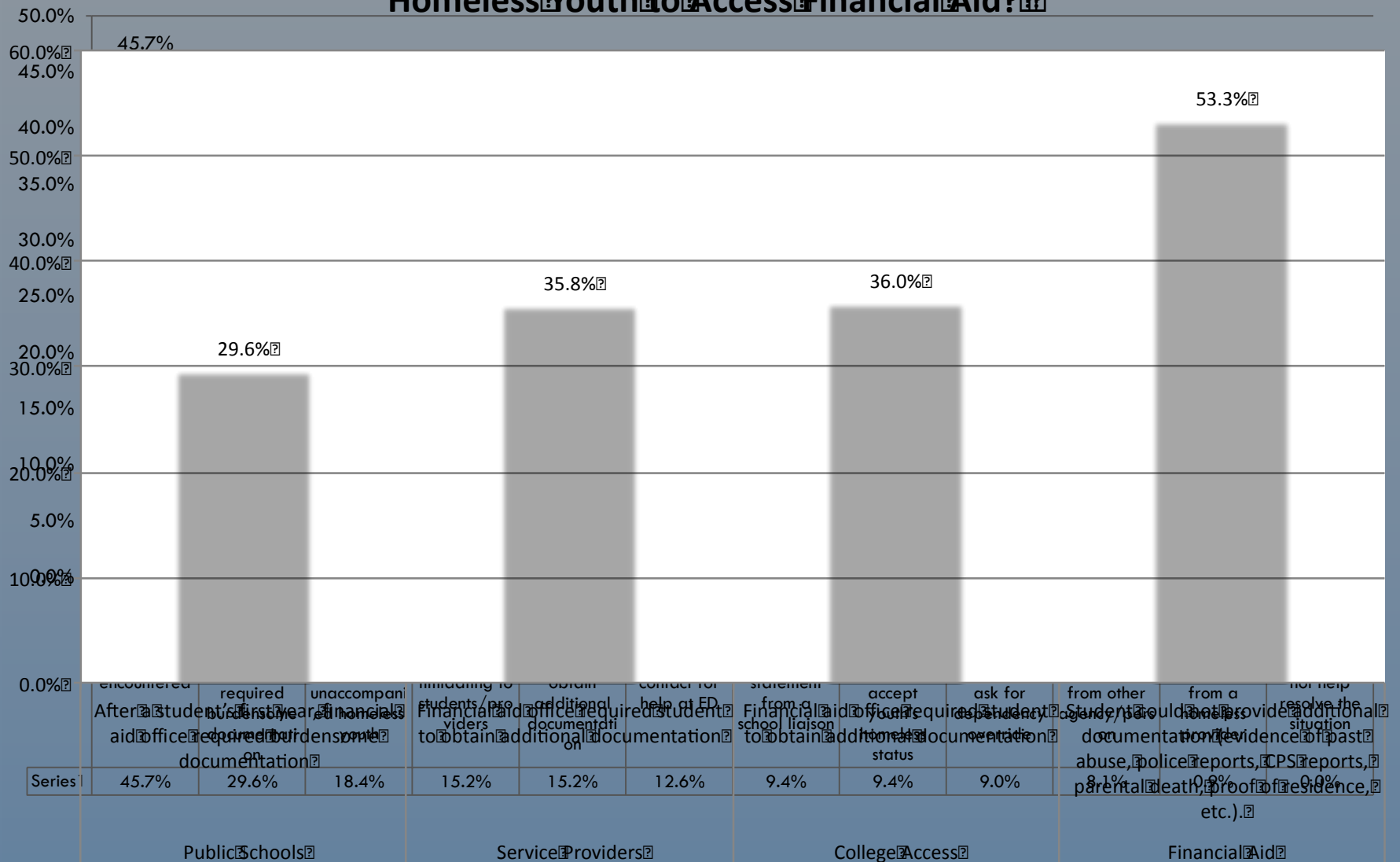
- Provides guidance for FAA's to make a determination of a student's homeless status
- Student can use college's administrative address as mailing address
 - UHY may be 21 or younger or still enrolled in high school on the date he/she signs the FAFSA
 - Dependency override required for 22-23 year olds
 - 24 or older is automatic independent status

Application and Verification Guide

FAA verification

- Not required unless there is conflicting information
- Documented interview (even via phone) is acceptable
- Should be done with discretion and sensitivity
 - Some information may be confidential (e.g. protected by doctor-patient privilege)
 - Child welfare reports are not necessary
- Guidance recommends consulting with local liaisons, State Coordinators, NCHE, school counselors, clergy, etc.

Barriers Reported by LEA Homeless Youth to Access Financial Aid?



Continuing Barriers

- 670 calls to NAEHCY's 1-800 helpline in just nine months
- Most calls are from homeless youth regarding independent student determinations
- Other issues are referrals for food, shelter, other resources, FAFSA completion and higher education fee waivers

Strategies for Access and Success #1: Host or Sponsor FAFSA Weeks/Nights

- Train high school counselors to identify UHY and assist with FAFSA
- Assist youth service providers to help youth fill out the FAFSA
- Ensure that UHY can participate in College Goal Sunday or similar nights
- Host a pizza night on campus for youth who need assistance with FAFSA completion

Strategies for Access and Success #2:

Help Students Choose A College

Students have many options to advance education beyond high school

- Two-year community and junior colleges
- Four-year colleges and universities
- Technical, Vocational, or Trade School
 - <http://studentaid.ed.gov/prepare-for-college/choosing-schools>
 - <http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator>

Strategies for Access and Success #3: Help Students Get Fee Waivers

- **ACT/SAT Fee Waivers**

- Help students obtain SAT/ACT Waiver
 - <http://www.actstudent.org/faq/feewaiver.html>
 - <http://professionals.collegeboard.com/testing/waivers/guidelines/sat>

- **Admission's Requirements**

- Make sure students know the admissions requirements (GPA, GED, ACT, SAT)
- Make sure students adhere to application deadlines for desired semester
- Make sure students obtain Admissions Application fee waiver
 - <http://www.nacacnet.org/studentinfo/feewaiver/Pages/default.aspx>

Strategies for Access and Success #4:

Connect with Statewide Network

- Networks convene a meeting with local stakeholders from McKinney-Vento K-12, Higher Education, RHYA/HUD shelter communities as well as other local service providers and advocates
- Allow each to share knowledge about their area of expertise
 - UHY and independent student definitions
 - Financial aid
 - Campus and community resources
- Network States
 - Current states include: **MI**, CO, NC, NH, KY, FL, GA, IL, MA, and OK
 - In development: NJ, VA, IN, and MT

Michigan Statewide Network

- Pam Kies-Lowe, State Coordinator for Homeless Education, Michigan Department of Education
Kies-LoweP@michigan.gov
- Mark Delorey, Director of Financial Aid, Western Michigan University
mark.delorey@wmich.edu
- Created SPOC's at the 4-year public colleges/universities (Single Points Of Contact)
 - Moving to creating SPOC's at Community Colleges
- Partnerships with
 - Michigan College Access Network (MCAN)
 - Fostering Success Michigan (FSM)
 - Michigan's Children
 - Many other youth serving organizations

Strategies for Access and Success #4: Connect Student with “SPOC”

SPOC - “Single Point of Contact”

A supportive college administrator on each campus who is committed to helping homeless youth (and often foster youth) successfully navigate the college-going process on campuses

- In place in **MI**, CO, NC, and GA
- In progress in AL, FL, NH, NV, MA, NJ, IN
- Example of Success:
Wayne State University HIGH Program

SPOC Model

Assist students with the following:

- **Admissions**
 - Connect students to counselors that can assist with applications and fee waivers
- **Financial aid**
 - Assist students with getting determinations of their unaccompanied homeless youth status, general awards and scholarship opportunities
- **Academic advising**
 - Connect students with advisors to develop work plans to increase retention and graduation
- **Housing**
 - Help students with on-campus, off-campus, and year-round housing options
- **Community resources**
 - Connect students to resources available in the community, such as benevolent services, food and clothing banks

NAEHCY Resources

**NAEHCY Higher Education Hotline:
855-446-2673**

[http://www.naehcy.org/educational-
resources/higher-ed](http://www.naehcy.org/educational-resources/higher-ed)

Toolkits

Podcasts

Tip sheets

Forms/Templates

And more!

Objectives

- Help students understand higher education is an option
- Help them realistically explore the possibilities
- Help them apply for admission and financial aid
 - *(Financial aid between you and me)*
- Help them get started
- Help them find the resources needed to transition

Higher Education IS an Option

- Too many young people become discouraged too early
- Middle School not too early to begin planning for college
- Options range from Harvard to vocational work at a CC
- “...And Financial Aid is available!”

Explore the Options

- Many young people don't understand what "college" is
- Assess interests and strengths honestly
- Don't let anyone sell youth with challenges short!!!

Admission and Financial Aid

- Remember that higher education is a “Buyer’s Market”
- Higher education officials want students to enroll
- Yet, barriers still exist
- Common experiences are frustration and anger

(Financial Aid Between You and Me)

- Some of my colleagues don't seem to “get it;” but most do
- Keep asking until you find someone who does “get it”
- We live in a world of rules, bureaucracy, audits and fear
- Common sense often has no room in our lives

Determining Who Qualifies to be Independent Based on the Definition



(Financial Aid Between You and Me)

- Unaccompanied Homeless Youth is the least common status we encounter, so it isn't always familiar
- UHY status requires that all three words apply
- UHY status assures the student can apply as "Independent"
- Can the student receive aid without UHY Independent status?

(Financial Aid Between You and Me)

- Independent by “professional judgment”
- Is it possible to apply as dependent and use parent info?
- A lot of people cheat on the FAFSA
- Preventing cheaters preserves the integrity of UHY status
- Examples....

What is at stake?

\$20,000 per year for 5 years =

\$100,000.00

Getting Started

- Basic information is needed up-front for students
- Collaboration with HS counselor, Admissions Office, Financial Aid, the school's SPOC
- Collaboration, collaboration, collaboration!

Finding Resources

- Be sure the student asks questions before starting college
- Help the student be assured they will make it beyond the first year / semester
- Does the school seem to understand students with need?
- Academic – housing – food – counseling – health – career

A Smooth Transition is Important

- Help assure the nuts and bolts details taken care of
- Help it be emotionally successful –
Positive attitude
- Is the student ready for school?
- Is the school ready for the student?

Races are won on the transition...



Races are lost on the transition...



Is it possible? The Dream Team



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